

Portion Sizes and School-Age Children

Do You Know How Much You Are Eating?

Misjudging food serving sizes is one of the most common mistakes people make when evaluating their eating habits. Research shows that people UNDERestimate how much grains, fats, oils and sweets they eat, and OVERestimate how much fruit, milk and protein they eat.¹ To better control your intake, you need to know what and how much you're eating.

Portions and servings - what's the difference?

- A **portion** is the amount of food you choose to eat. There is no standard portion size and no single right or wrong portion size.
- A **serving** is a standard amount used to help give advice about how much to eat, or to identify how many calories and nutrients are in a food.

Example: a sandwich with 2 slices of bread. The Food Guide Pyramid **serving size** for bread is **1 slice**. Your **portion** is **2 slices**, which equals **2 servings** from the Pyramid.

Pyramid Math

Plan on eating the number of servings recommended from each group each day. Compare the portions you eat with standard Pyramid servings to judge whether you eat the recommended amounts. Your portion sizes do not have to match the serving sizes, but the total amount you eat over the day should match the total recommended amount.

Secrets of the Pyramid

A Pyramid serving may not be the same as the portion you choose to eat - compare to find out how many servings are in your portion. Be especially careful when counting servings from the grains and meats groups to figure out how many Pyramid servings are in your portions.

Check the nutrition label for the difference between a "portion" and "serving"

Pour out your usual portion size of a food (such as cereal or juice) and compare it to the serving size on the label. Chances are, you're eating two, three, four or more times the amount on the label. For example: many soft drinks are packaged in 20-ounce or larger containers. Most people drink the whole container and consider it ONE SERVING. However, this is actually the PORTION SIZE that they choose to consume. If you look at the label, the 20-ounce container is supposed to provide 2.5 or more SERVINGS! Look at the label to learn the SIZE of serving and NUMBER of servings. Remember: the serving sizes listed on the Nutrition Facts Label may be different from Food Guide Pyramid serving sizes. The label serving size is not meant to tell you how much to eat, but to help identify nutrients in a food and to make product comparisons easier.

Ask yourself how many standard servings go into the portion you usually eat. Are you eating 3 servings when you are full after 2? Pouring 2 servings when your activity level requires just one? If the answer is yes, gradually reduce the size of your typical portion. Want to cheat? Most of us don't eat enough vegetables and fruit. They are low in calories and fat and full of vitamins and minerals. Help yourself to more as you cut back on other foods.²

¹FamEcoNutrRev 2002, 14:1

²AICR Newsletter, Spring 2001, Issue 71)

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